

Introduction

As an educator and a counselor, for the past six years, I have experienced the value of involving students in active learning and using tools to enhance their cognitive development. I have had the opportunity to work with a very diverse student population in an inner city environment. As an educator, my approach is to work with the “whole” child, to encompass the student’s cultural, social, personal and academic background and needs. In revising these lessons I based the changes made on this premise. For me it is important to remember that when I am educating a child I am not only expanding their present knowledge, but am enhancing their past and future experiences.

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Each year the Project WILD Aquatic Coordinator receives numerous requests for educational materials appropriate for preschool and primary students, 4-8 years old. The early learning years are a fundamental period for the formation of attitudes and thus of great importance in developing a generation that is conscious of the need to respect the aquatic environment. Young children throughout California need to learn that they have an impact on the natural world and their impact can be positive or negative. Once young children explore and feel their connections with the natural world they will understand that impact. This understanding will lead to behavior and attitudes that can help keep inland watersheds as well as coastal and marine life healthy.

Project WILD Aquatic activities have been adapted using teaching strategies, which are literature-based, hands-on, multi-curricular and theme-based. An Early Childhood Education teacher and counselor in collaboration with the Project WILD Aquatic Coordinator adapted the curriculum. However, we need to thank Audrey Walker who lead the way with her Utah Early Childhood program, she really demonstrated the need and the possibilities. The Colorado and Minnesota Early Childhood guides provided a rich source of references and stimulated lots of ideas. We appreciate the efforts of these state coordinators and the writers for providing such valuable assets.

Bobbie Winn
California Project WILD Aquatic Coordinator

